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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8834
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000486

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/INSB, S/CT, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2019
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: BANGLADESH'S NEW INTEL CHIEF PROMISES ENHANCED CT
COOPERATION

Classified By: CDA A.I. GEETA PASI. REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

SUMMARY
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1. (S) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has instructed DGFI to focus on counterterrorism issues and work closely with the U.S. Government, according to Director General Mollah Fazle Akbar. Akbar emphasized that DGFI would no longer support efforts by extremists to enter the political arena. Akbar added that Bangladesh's intelligence agencies were trying to improve their relationship with India and streamline their own internal communications. Akbar acknowledged strong USG concerns about reports of deaths in custody of detained Bangladesh Rifles mutineers.

DESIRE TO WORK WITH US
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2. (S) During an 11 May meeting, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Director General Major General Mollah Fazle Akbar told the Ambassador and RAO Counselor that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had made it clear DGFI would focus on counterterrorism issues and work closely with the U.S. Government. Akbar said he intended to increase cooperation with the U.S. Embassy and wanted to obtain training for his counterterrorism officers. Akbar said the Prime Minister directed him to bring new officers not tainted from their involvement in anti-corruption and political activities during the State of Emergency in to DGFI. As such, many of his new officers had no intelligence or counterterrorism training and he was relying on the U.S. to help DGFI's counterterrorism capacity building. The Ambassador thanked Akbar for DGFI's cooperation on CT issues during the past six months, noting he had observed a significant upswing in DGFI activity since the departure of several senior DGFI officers in late 2008. The Ambassador underscored the need for close coordination with the RAO Counselor and Indian Government as the terrorism threat in Bangladesh effected the entire region.

No Support for Extremists Joining Politics
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3. (S) Akbar said that when he joined DGFI in February 2009, the Prime Minister told him that under no circumstance was DGFI to politically or financially support Islamic militant groups as had been the case when members of Harakat-ul-Jihah-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B) floated the DGFI backed Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) in late 2008. He added the Prime Minister expressed her displeasure with DGFI's role in creating the IDP, as the core leadership of the IDP was associated with HUJI-B members who had tried to kill her in 2004.

Islamic Militants still a Concern

14. (S) The Ambassador asked Akbar for his assessment of the current threat posed by Jama'atul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB). Akbar said the JMB threat had not disappeared and the group was reorganizing. That said, the government assessed JMB was not close to conducting attacks in Bangladesh. When asked about JMB's alleged plan to assassinate opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader Khaleda Zia prior to the December 2008 parliamentary election, Akbar appeared not to know about the incident, although he acknowledged JMB may have wanted to influence the election. Nevertheless, he noted, JMB had failed to do that. Akbar added the government was keeping known JMB members under "close surveillance."

Slow but Improving Relationship with India

15. (S) Akbar touched briefly on DGFI's relationship with India's Research and Analysis Wing. Akbar said that for a variety of reasons the relationship had never been good. Acting on guidance from the Prime Minister, Akbar and his subordinates were meeting more frequently with Indian intelligence representatives and information sharing on terrorism suspects was on the rise, particularly with regards to members of Pakistan-militant groups operating in Bangladesh.

Security Service Coordination Improving but Barriers Remain

16. (S) The Ambassador asked Akbar for his views on Bangladesh

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Intelligence Community reform and praised DGFI's participation in twice monthly inter-agency security coordination meetings organized by the Home Affairs Ministry. The Ambassador and RAO Counselor noted the lack of sharing among Bangladesh's security/intelligence organizations hampered efficient use of scarce resources and more coordination and sharing of information was required, especially at the working level. Akbar agreed stove piping was a problem and said his goal was to push information down to his subordinates and out to other organizations. He also said he supported increased cooperation among Bangladesh's security organizations in the field, not just at the headquarters level. In response to the Ambassador's question on the existence of secure electronic communications among Bangladesh's security/intelligence organizations, Akbar said no such system existed. Historically, there was no interconnectivity due to compartmentalization and internal security concerns, but Akbar agreed such a system could be useful in the future as cultural barriers on the sharing of information were broken down.

Regret over Custodial Deaths of Bangladesh Rifles Jawans

17. (S) The Ambassador raised the U.S. Government's serious concern with the number of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans who had died in Bangladesh Government custody since the implementation of "Operation Rebel Hunt" in early March. Akbar gave an overview of some of the deaths and said that several older jawans had legitimately died of natural causes or suicide. Akbar also acknowledged aggressive interrogation techniques by young officers from the army, navy, and air force had led to the deaths of some of the jawans. In an effort to quickly interview the 7-8,000 jawans in custody, the government had pulled in dozens of military officers to participate in the interrogations. These officers had no interrogation experience and had exceeded their authorities during the interrogations. The government now realized its mistake and the Prime Minister had shared with Akbar her concern about the custodial deaths. He added the government had put the word out that the deaths must stop. Akbar was emphatic on the issues of DGFI's involvement in the interrogations and stated no DGFI officers were involved or present in any of the cases where the BDR jawans died while

in custody.

COMMENT
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18. (S) The improvement in our relationship with DGFI begun following the Mumbai attacks has continued since the Awami League government took office in January. The new Director General has received clear marching orders to take DGFI in a new direction and the USG should support his efforts to professionalize the agency. Our message regarding deaths in custody of BDR detainees has registered with DGFI and other senior GOB officials. We expect to see a change in how the GOB handles these detainees.
PASI